

**Finding a Balance that Works for La Jolla
Council President Scott Peters, First District
For the La Jolla Light, May 2007**

My thanks and congratulations to everyone from the community, the Mayor's staff and the City Council who worked toward a compromise to avert a vote on decertification of the La Jolla Community Planning Association ("LJCPA").

Members of the City Council rely heavily on local community planning groups to serve as our eyes and ears in the neighborhood. Although the LJCPA's work is not often visible outside the immediate community, it has recently seen more than its fair share of publicity. On February 1 of this year, the group began operating under bylaws not yet approved by the City. Since approval is a condition of maintaining official recognition, the future of the CPA was placed in the hands of the City Council, and the only remedy spelled out in the City Council policy is decertification.

This was a very difficult issue for me personally. On one hand, I understand that the Planning Department has a limited budget and resources. Allowing, interpreting and enforcing 42 different sets of rules for 42 different planning groups across the City would create an administrative nightmare. When I learned how prohibitively expensive and time-consuming such a proposal would be, I was both surprised and alarmed. Allowing each group to choose its own rules might mean as many as 42 separate appearances in front of Council, a daunting prospect. For this reason, the Planning Department asked all planning groups in the City to postpone any requests for revisions until a new bylaws framework allowing greater customization is complete.

At the same time, I was sympathetic to the concerns voiced by the community. My wife and I have lived in La Jolla since we moved to San Diego in 1989, and we have raised our children here. I know that our community, like every community, has special needs under the planning system. I know the CPA's ad hoc committee worked very hard to create specially tailored bylaws that the whole community seemed to support. I read those bylaws and saw that most of the changes were good for the community and should be acceptable to the City.

Last week's compromise was to suspend the applicability of those parts of the new bylaws that had not been approved, keeping in place the remaining changes and honoring the election results of this past March. This struck a balance between addressing the community's immediate concerns regarding the bylaws and the need for predictability called for by the Mayor's office.

Most important, I was pleased that the community members in attendance were able to appreciate the arguments from both sides and reach an agreement. Other communities fight the same battles over development and share anxiety about the role of professionals from the development industry – architects, planners, engineers, etc. But only in La Jolla do we see this battle get so consistently personal, nasty and public. I hope that the cooperative spirit shown by the community toward the end of the hearing is one that we

will see in the future. It's only through respectful, inclusive and informed neighborhood discussions that planning groups create advice that's useful to the City.

I encourage members of the community to attend meetings of the CPA to learn about issues in your neighborhood, and express your views. Meetings are held the first Thursday of every month at 6:00 p.m., at the La Jolla Recreation Center on Prospect Street.